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Truman Says CIA Has Been Diverted From Purpose for Which He Started It

By HARRY S. TRUMAN

Independence, Mo., Dec. 21—(NANA)—I think it has become necessary to take another look at the purpose and operations of our Central Intelligence Agency.

At least, I would like to submit here the original reason why I thought it necessary to organize this agency during my administration, what I expected it to do and how it was to operate as an arm of the President.

I think it is fairly obvious that by and large a President's performance in office is as effective as the information he has and the information he gets.

He needs to have available to him the most accurate and up-to-the-minute information on what is going on everywhere in the world, and particularly of the trends and developments in all the danger spots in the contest between East and West. This is an immense task and requires a special kind of an intelligence facility.

Conflicting Reports

Of course, every President has available to him all the information gathered by the many intelligence agencies already in existence. The Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Interior and others are constantly engaged in extensive information gathering and have done excellent work. But their collective information reached the President all too frequently in conflicting conclusions.

At times the intelligence reports tended to be slanted to conform to established positions of a given department. This becomes confusing and what's worse, such intelligence is of little use to a President in reaching his right decisions.

Sometimes Too Late

I have seen instances where the Army, Navy and the State Department were duplicating their intelligence coverage—which resulted in inaccurate conclusions. I have always felt that the Pearl Harbor disaster

was partly the result of that kind of intelligence confusion.

It seemed to me that much of the intelligence gathered failed to reach the top levels in the Government and that when it did it was not in proper form. In critical times certain important bits of information came too late, thus preventing the adoption of a course of action necessary to protect our security.

Therefore, I decided to set up a special organization charged with the collection of all intelligence reports from every available source, and to have those reports reach me as President without departmental "treatment" or interpretations.

I wanted and needed the information in its natural raw state and in as comprehensive a volume as it was practical for me to make full use of it. But the most important thing about this move was to guard against the chance of intelligence being used to influence or to lead the President into unwise decisions—and I thought it was necessary that the President do his own thinking and evaluating.

Since the responsibility for decision making was his, he had to be sure that no information is kept from him for whatever reason at the discretion of any one department or agency, or that unpleasant facts be kept from him. There are always those who would want to shield a President from bad news or misjudgments to spare him from being "upset."

Men of Integrity

Now, this at best was a most difficult requirement to meet, and the only thing I could think about that would give it some reasonable assurances of success is that the people placed in charge of this new intelligence facility for the President were men of the highest integrity and would possess the capacity to work on the highest level of governmental responsibility and to have no involvements of any kind in partisan politics.

I wanted to make sure that CIA was not to be another overlapping facility. Quite to the contrary—it was intended to prevent it. As I visualized it, it was to coordinate and consolidate the flow of information so that it would reach the President with no intervening steps in that process. It was to be directly under the President and, solely responsible to the President.

In this way, the Central Intelligence Agency would function as a source of continuing vital information, unedited and uninterpreted for the use of the President, thus enabling him to be informed on everything current and without the usual procedural delays.

Disturbing Diversion

For some time I have been distributed by the way the CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the Government. This has led to trouble and may have compounded our difficulties in several explosive areas.

I never had any thought when I set up the CIA that it would be injected into peacetime cloak-and-dagger operations. Some of the complications and embarrassment that I think we have experienced are in part attributable to the fact that this quiet intelligence arm of the President has been so removed from its intended role that it is being interpreted as a symbol of sinister and mysterious foreign intrigue—and a subject for cold war enemy propaganda.

With all the nonsense put out by Communist propaganda about "Yankee imperialism," "exploitive capitalism," "war-mongering" and "monopolists," the last thing we needed was for the CIA to be seized upon as something akin to a subverting influence in the affairs of other people.

Searching Questions

I well knew the first temporary director of the CIA, Sidney Souder, and the first permanent directors of the CIA, Gen.

Hoyt Vandenberg and Allen Dulles. These were men of the highest character, patriotism and integrity—and I assume this is true of all those who continue in charge.

But, there are now some searching questions that need to be answered. I, therefore, would like to see the CIA be restored to its original assignment as the intelligence arm of the President and that its operational duties be terminated or properly used elsewhere.

We have grown up as a nation, respected for our free institutions and for our ability to maintain a free and open society. There is something about the way the CIA has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historic position and I feel we need to correct it.